

December 2016 VSP Newsletter

Hi folks! This is the monthly installment of a Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) informational newsletter. Please sign up to receive the newsletter [here](#). Feedback is welcome at beller@scc.wa.gov. **Note: There will not be a January 2017 VSP Newsletter.**

JOINT MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL PANEL AND STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE: The next joint meeting of the TP and SAC will be January 4, 2017, from 8:30 am-12pm. The in-person meeting locations will be in Lacey and Colville, and the meeting will also be available by webinar. Full details will be available on the [TP web page](#) or [SAC web page](#).

As with prior meetings, this meeting is being held in Lacey and Colville. Please note that while the meeting location in Lacey has not changed (Washington State Department of Ecology - Headquarters, 300 Desmond Drive, Lacey, WA), the meeting location in the Department of Ecology Headquarters was changed to the ROA-36 Auditorium in order to accommodate more in-person attendees. Please see the [agenda](#) for more information.

We anticipate an increased number of attendees at the January 4th meeting because a main focus of the meeting will be the informal presentation of the work that Thurston County has done so far on their VSP work plan. We will also continue our discussion of VSP and shorelines, monitoring, the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee Decision-making Framework document, and there will be a presentation by Anchor QEA on their efforts to create a work plan template.

Also, this meeting will be available by webinar. Webinar registration instructions are listed in the [agenda](#) and below. Remember, you'll need to register for the webinar and then add the log in information to your calendar after registering.

Please register for VSP Technical Panel & Statewide Advisory Committee meeting on Jan 4, 2017 8:30 AM PST at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6634114890989594625>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. ***Please remember to mute your phones until you want to join the conversation.***

The [agenda](#) is also posted on the TP and SAC web pages.

REGIONAL VSP Meetings: The Commission will host two regional VSP meetings for all persons who might be interested in the current state of the VSP. Each meeting will have the same agenda, so you'll only need to attend the one most convenient for you to attend. Each meeting will be from 9am-3pm. Lunch will be provided. An agenda is being finalized, but

topics will likely include a presentation by Chelan or Thurston County on the work they have done so far on their VSP work plans, VSP agricultural viability, VSP monitoring, outreach to the agricultural community in a VSP work plan, available incentive programs for VSP participants, and the VSP Technical Panel work plan evaluation process. Meeting dates and locations have been finalized and are set out below:

January 24, 2017

Moses Lake, Washington

9:00 am to 3:00 pm

City Council Chambers, Civic Center
401 S. Balsam St
Moses Lake, WA 98837
[Map/Directions](#)

January 27, 2017

Lacey, Washington

9:00 am to 3:00 pm

[Washington State Department of Ecology -](#)
[Headquarters](#)
ROA-36 - Auditorium room
300 Desmond Drive
Lacey, WA 98503-1274
Receptionist: 360-407-6000
[Map/Directions](#)

VSP TECHNICAL PANEL AND STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: Meeting minutes for both the VSP Technical Panel (TP) and VSP Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) can be found on their web pages - [here](#) for the TP and [here](#) for the SAC.

VSP MONTHLY CONSULTANT Q&A: The December webinar for all those interested in VSP at a statewide level is coming up on **Thursday, December 15 from 9am-9:30am**. This conference call is meant to be a Q & A on VSP for all 27 VSP opt-in counties. The purpose of the call is to be a forum to disseminate information about VSP on a statewide level and to answer VSP related questions. It is open to any who want to phone in, but mainly directed at County staff, Conservation District staff, and consultants and facilitators responsible for VSP. ***Please note: the December Q&A call has moved from Dec 8 to December 15th. There will not be a January Q&A call.***

If you've forgotten the registration link to sign up for the webinars, I've added a link on the [VSP Workgroups web page](#) under the "webinars" tab, and have included the link here as well:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/3230111551780226050>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Links to past webinar recordings are available on the [VSP Workgroups web page](#).

VSP REIMBURSEMENTS: Remember, the Commission's agency policy requires monthly reimbursement requests for all VSP contracts (as well as any other contracts). We have

noticed that there are quarterly requests being sent in. Monthly reimbursement requests allow entities to stay on top of expenses and contract end dates. So, please remember to voucher monthly for VSP expenses.

VSP BILLING FOR LIGHT REFRESHMENTS AT MEETINGS: The Commission's financial staff report that they have recently received reimbursement requests for light refreshments at VSP work group meetings that cannot be processed because the required list of meeting attendees did not accompany the request. Please remember, as per the VSP billing FAQ's, that **a list of meeting attendees must accompany any request for reimbursement for light refreshments at meetings**. For more information, please see the [Billing FAQ](#) or contact [Karla Heinitz](#).

VSP BILLING FOR TRAVEL: Travel is an allowable cost to be billed for under the VSP county contract with the Commission. Travel costs are to be documented as outlined in the FAQ on billing. Travel costs must also abide by all rules and regulations for state travel. For instance, travel must be within state per diem rates (i.e. mileage is currently at \$0.54). If there are any hotel expenses, those would also have to be within state per diem rates. Out of state travel is prohibited without prior authorization from the Commission. State travel rules and regulations are included in the Statewide Accounting & Administration Manual (SAAM), Chapter 10. A link to the SAAM is [here](#). For more information, please see the [Billing FAQ](#) or contact [Karla Heinitz](#).

STATE AGENCY INVOLVEMENT WITH VSP: We addressed this back in the May 2016 VSP Newsletter, but we are still getting questions, so we've re-published this topic. Various state agencies (in particular the Department of Commerce (DOC), Department of Ecology (ECY), Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Conservation Commission (WSCC)) are involved in VSP in a variety of ways. The WSCC's VSP web page describes each agency's level of involvement in VSP, how its programs interact with VSP, and staff contacts for VSP.

Specifically, each state agency listed above has a seat on the VSP Technical Panel (TP). Each agency has agreed to provide the necessary staff to participate in the TP. The TP is to review the VSP work plans of the 27 counties who have opted-in to the VSP. The TP will assess whether the plan, in conjunction with other plans and regulations, will protect critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture in the watershed.

Each agency has agreed that agency staff will participate in the local VSP workgroups at the agency's discretion. Agency staff will also be responsible for responding to requests for data and information from the local workgroup. Further information on agency involvement is set out below. None of the agencies listed (DOC, ECY, WSDA, WDFW, WSCC) serve as voting members of local VSP work groups.

ECOLOGY INVOLVEMENT IN VSP: The Department of Ecology is interested in helping VSP Watershed Groups achieve clean water, and protect and enhance critical areas. At this time, Ecology has limited capacity to engage with the multiple VSP work plans being developed this biennium. While we are not able to participate actively in VSP technical committees or routinely attend meetings, we can provide the following support:

- The most current information on wetlands, aquatic habitat, frequently flooded areas, groundwater protection, and water quality that we recommend be included as you develop the VSP work plan.

- GIS data layers useful for wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, and frequently flooded areas.
- Response to technical questions and review of draft VSP sections on wetlands, frequently flooded areas, aquifer recharge areas and clean water requirements.
- Information on existing technical resources that may be helpful as you develop your plans (such as TMDLs, groundwater and surface water studies, and information on known water quality impairments)

The Department of Ecology has also designated Zachery Meyer, from the Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program, Central Regional Office, as Ecology's Voluntary Stewardship Program Coordinator. He can be reached at VSP.Coordinator@ecy.wa.gov or 509-454-3619.

WSDA INVOLVEMENT IN VSP: The Department of Agriculture is interested in helping VSP Watershed Groups promote and enhance the viability of agriculture while protecting and enhancing natural resources. We are devoted to assisting as much as possible at the local level with the development of work plans as well as assessments of available and relevant data sets. WSDA will:

- Participate in as many work plan meetings as possible (either in person or on the phone)
- Provide every county with an ArcGIS online map that includes wetland, stream, and agricultural land use data (this can be used as a starting point for your assessment or in conjunction with other data sources).
- Respond to technical questions and review draft work plan sections on agricultural viability and enhancement, monitoring and assessment benchmarks, etc.
- Provide information on existing technical resources that may be helpful as you develop your plans (such as WSDA-led groundwater and surface water studies, agricultural research on BMP's, and ag water quality impairments)

Our email address for inquiries is: kmclain@agr.wa.gov. Kelly McLain, our senior Natural Resource Scientist and land use policy lead is the point of contact for VSP engagement. Please contact her for access to maps, datasets, and participation on your workgroups.

WDF&W INVOLVEMENT IN VSP: Conserving WA's fish and wildlife through VSP begins with the important role that agriculture is already playing in providing habitat. The WDFW is interested in helping agricultural producers understand how best to achieve conservation while maintaining agricultural viability. We plan on being active throughout the state as technical experts for conservation of fish and wildlife:

- Providing a technical expert to watershed groups that can identify where and how Priority Habitat and Species overlap with agricultural activities and what activities might be impactful. We plan on attending as many technical meetings as possible. At the community's request we may serve as non voting workgroup members or as members of the workgroup's technical committee
- Providing useful GIS layers for Priority Habitat and Species
- Technical review of VSP drafts on fish and wildlife
- Help with understanding elements of successful monitoring including baseline conditions, benchmarks and goals. In addition, we can provide expertise on adaptive management to ensure long term success of local plans.

NRCS INVOLVEMENT IN VSP: Many of you are wondering how the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will participate in Washington State's VSP. NRCS has a legacy of providing excellent customer service and supporting their natural resource partners.

However, due to limited staff availability and some limitations on federal participation in county governmental matters, NRCS personnel can comment and provide input on the following related to VSP:

- Information on NRCS conservation practices and associated standards
- Application of NRCS conservation practices on private agricultural, range, forested land
- NRCS conservation and voluntary incentive programs
- Input and guidance on development of watershed level conservation plans as they relate to conservation on private agriculture, range, or forest land
- Discuss ecosystem stewardship as it relates to voluntary conservation
- Information on NRCS's planning initiatives and pilots such as the Voluntary Natural Resources Conservation Plan or Resource Stewardship Pilot

NRCS personnel will not be able to:

- Serve in an official capacity on any VSP committee or work group
- Vote on any resolutions or participate in any polls that may be before the County Commissioners with regard to VSP
- Provide an opinion on the County's designation of critical areas
- Comment on determination of best available science
- Review or comment on non-NRCS best management practices that may be under consideration
- Review or comment on regulations pertinent to agriculture/forestry or use of natural resources

For more information on the extent of NRCS involvement in VSP, please contact Larry Johnson, NRCS point of contact for VSP. Larry can be reached at (509) 323-2955 or Larry.A.Johnson@wa.usda.gov.

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